

Lights and Levels: Illuminating and Elevating our Offerings to Young Children

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Towards the end of winter in the midwest, everyone could use a little bit of inspiration. This year I was fortunate enough to visit one of my favorite sources of play-based inspiration, Boulder Journey School. Touring the classrooms at Boulder Journey, I noticed all the different opportunities there were to engage with light and various play levels across all age groups. Each room had natural light, projectors, light tables, and reflective materials. They also had materials offered on platforms, shelves, platforms, cubbies and nooks, drawing your attention and inspiring curiosity.

When I returned to Stepping Stones we decided to kick off our own Lights and Levels project across schools, illuminating and elevating our offerings to children.

Part One: Play Levels

Diversifying play levels in the classroom provides the opportunity to:

- Define Space
- Highlight materials
- Offer a new perspective



At Boulder Journey, I observed diverse play levels used for small world play, loose parts offerings, and building or construction. Our Lincoln Square Blossoms classroom has some highly engaged builders, so we decided to offer a set of platforms to that group of children to see how they responded in their play. Over the next few weeks these preschoolers engaged with one large wooden riser, and a slightly smaller mirrored platform in their construction area, as their teachers observed.

What did we notice?

Defining Space: Both platforms served to define space for the builders. They expanded their structures from edge to edge, rarely stretching beyond the limits of the raised platform. Teachers added other play levels nearby (benches & small tables) and watched as it inspired expansion of their creations.



Our wonder question: How can we continue to provide interesting defined space for building?